“My day started at 6 am. We left the hotel. We came to work at 6:30 am and my day ended around 8 or 9 at night (…) We didn't have time to eat. It could have been at 1, at 2, at 3, sometimes at 5. There were times that they gave us food at 8 pm, that is we didn't have a specific schedule that they gave us food.”

This is a recount of an agricultural worker employed by J Marin Corporation on the circumstances he faced while working harvesting watermelons in Florida. The employee, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, detailed how his employer violated its obligations under the H-2A Program regarding its employment of non-immigrant temporary agricultural workers.

The fieldworker detailed how they were forced to work under harsh weather conditions without proper hydration or food intake; lived in unsanitary conditions in cramped spaces in hotel rooms, unsuitable and deteriorating buildings, and even a former jail; and were paid below the governing hourly rate because or they simply have not been paid for all hours worked.

The worker explained that they were given six liters of water for a group of nine people while working under the harsh Florida sun. Due to poor hydration, they sometimes felt dizziness, nausea, and even fainted because of heatstroke, while supervisors sometimes scolded them for their physical symptoms and were promptly forced back to work. In multiple violations of the H-2A program, J Marín employees were forced to work 7 days a week while being significantly underpaid, had no mobile sanitary stations to wash hands or use restrooms, and were told to lie about the working conditions to the Department of Labor (DOL) inspectors that were present on the fields, and were threatened by their employers to not reveal what went on in the fields or their families would face retribution.

Documents of the Southeastern Division of the Southeastern District Court of Missouri show that de DOL filed a complaint against J Marin Corporation for forcing workers to endure unsanitary work environments, inhumane and unhealthy housing conditions, and significant federal regulatory wage violations. Jorge Marín was contacted via e-mail for this story and he replied that his English was not suitable enough to answer these questions, but that he made an effort to comply with DOL requirements for employment of non-immigrant workers. “There are some claims that are simply incorrect. I am not able to discuss all of these facts right now, but for example, I want you to know that it appears that the DOL overlooked that I believe we had freshwater containers in the fields with every crew,” Marin replied.